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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000541

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/SE DAS BRYZA, EEB AMB. MORNINGSTAR

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TAGS: PREL ENRG EPET ZJ ZK TU

SUBJECT: TURKEY INSISTS ON EASTERN PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT INVITE

REF: DIXON/GARBE APRIL 9/10 E-MAIL (NOTAL)

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Jeffrey, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) MFA U/S Apakan told Ambassador April 10 that Ankara's position is firm: Turkey needs to get an invitation to observe at the EU Eastern Partnership (EP) Summit May 7. Apakan argued that Turkey, as a member of the European Customs Union and a major partner of the Caucasus states in various endeavors, simply needs to play in the EP for its own sake.

¶2. (C) This tracks with and complements what we have heard (ref) about the Turks refusing to go to the Southern Corridor Summit at a senior level without an invite to the EP.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: Turkey's EU candidacy, geography and influence in the region justify its participation at the EP, not least at a time when Turkey is on the cusp of an historic agreement to normalize relations and open the border with Armenia that could have a catalytic impact on resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Progress on either front, and especially on both, will enhance considerably the EU's ability to make progress on its EP objectives. Second, we absolutely need the Turks at the Southern Corridor Summit, now held hostage by an EP invite. At this critical juncture, we must seek to take advantage of any and all opportunities to bring Turkish, Armenian and Azerbaijani leaders together bilaterally and, as appropriate, trilaterally. The EP and the Southern Corridor Summit present an opportunity to do that, and the EU should be supportive. Excluding Turkey will only cause it to seek to exclude the EU, and by extension the U.S., from alternative regional mechanisms it is actively seeking to promote, such as the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (CSCP) and the Black Sea Defense Ministerial. Furthermore, with the Turks threatening to stay away from the Southern Corridor Summit without an EP invite, we should urge the EU to take the steps necessary to ensure that Turkey attends Southern Corridor Summit at a senior level. Absent Turkish participation, that summit is unlikely to be successful.

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Jeffrey